

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
FOR
COOPERATIVE, COMPREHENSIVE AND CONTINUING
TRANSPORTATION PLANNING
AND THE ESTABLISHMENT
OF A RURAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATION
FOR**

The **County of Brunswick** and the participating municipalities therein; the **County of Columbus** and the participating municipalities therein; the **County of Pender** and the participating municipalities therein; and the **North Carolina Department of Transportation**.

WITNESSETH

Whereas, section 135 of Title 23, United States Code, declares that it is in the national interest to encourage and promote the development of transportation systems embracing various modes of transportation in a manner that will serve all areas of the State efficiently and effectively; and,

Whereas, North Carolina General Statute 136-18 was amended by the North Carolina General Assembly by ratification of Senate Bill 1195 on July 6, 2000, and this same bill was signed by the Governor on July 14, 2000, and subsequently Chaptered, and which Chaptered statute provides for the establishment of Rural Transportation Planning Organizations (RPOs), similar in concept to Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), which provide transportation planning in North Carolina's urban areas; and,

Whereas, the establishment of a Rural Transportation Planning Organization (RPO), similar in concept to the urban Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organizations (MPOs) would provide rural areas the opportunity to work in partnership with the North Carolina Department of Transportation toward development of sound, short and long-range transportation planning for rural areas; and,

Whereas, the establishment of a Rural Transportation Planning Organization for the three county Region O Rural Transportation Planning area would assist the North Carolina Department of Transportation in complying with the provisions of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA 21), enacted June 9, 1998, relative to the participation of local officials and the public in the transportation planning process; and,

Whereas, it is the desire of these local governments and agencies to establish a continuing, comprehensive, cooperative transportation planning process with the establishment of a Rural Transportation Planning Organization for the three county Region O Rural Transportation Planning Area.

Now, therefore, the following memorandum of understanding is made.

Section 1. It is hereby agreed, that the County of Brunswick, the County of Columbus, the County of Pender, and the North Carolina Department of Transportation intend to establish and participate in a Rural Transportation Planning Organization created for the general purposes and responsibilities outlined below:

1. To develop long-range local and regional multi-modal transportation plans in cooperation with the area MPO and the North Carolina Department of Transportation.
2. To provide a forum for public participation in the rural transportation planning process.
3. To develop and prioritize suggestions for transportation projects, which the Rural Transportation Planning Organization believes should be included in the State Transportation Improvement Program.
4. To provide transportation-related information to local governments and other interested organizations and persons.
5. To conduct transportation related studies and surveys for local governments and other interested entities/organizations.

6. To undertake mutually agreed upon transportation related tasks to enhance transportation system development, coordination and efficiency.

Section 2. It is hereby further agreed that transportation plans and programs and land use policies and programs for the Rural Transportation Planning Organization will be coordinated by the Region O Council of Governments, an agency selected on behalf of participating local governments and the North Carolina Department of Transportation, to be the administrative entity and to serve as the lead local planning agency for coordinating transportation planning in the four county planning area.

Section 3. Establishment of Rural Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC). A Rural Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC) is hereby established with the responsibility for serving as a forum for cooperative transportation planning decision making for the Rural Transportation Planning Organization (RPO). The Rural Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC) shall have the responsibility of keeping the policy boards informed of the status and requirements of the transportation planning process; to assist in the dissemination and clarification of the decisions, inclinations, and policies of the policy boards; and to help ensure meaningful public participation in the rural transportation planning process.

1. The Rural Transportation Advisory Committee will be responsible for carrying out the following:
 - A. Establishment of goals, priorities, and objectives for the Rural transportation planning process.
 - B. Review and recommend changes to adopted Transportation Plans for the Rural Transportation Planning Organization.
 - C. Review and recommend a work program for transportation planning which defines work tasks and responsibilities for the various agencies participating in the Rural Transportation Planning Organization (RPO).
 - D. Review and recommend transportation improvement projects that support and enhance intra-county transportation within the three county Rural Transportation Planning Organization (RPO).
2. The membership of the Rural Transportation Advisory Committee shall consist of the following:
 - A. Two County Commissioners representing the County of Brunswick. Two municipal elected officials elected by a caucus of the Mayors of those Brunswick County municipalities outside the MPO who join in this agreement by signing this MOU.
 - B. Two County Commissioners representing the County of Columbus. Two municipal elected officials elected by a caucus of the Mayors of those Columbus County municipalities who join in this agreement by signing this MOU.
 - C. Two County Commissioners representing the County of Pender. Two municipal elected officials elected by a caucus of the Mayors of those Towns in Pender County who join in this agreement by signing this MOU.
 - D. All members of the North Carolina Board of Transportation representing the Department of Transportation Divisions 03 and 06.
3. The County Commissioner representing each County on the RTAC shall be elected every two- (2) years by the Board of County Commissioners of each County in regular session. The municipal RTAC representatives shall be elected every two (2) by a caucus of the Mayors of those Towns that join this agreement by signing the MOU. The term of office for all seats on the RTAC is two years. Re-appointment is possible.
4. To facilitate staggered terms and thereby promote continuity, the initial appointments of the municipal and county representatives shall be split, with one being elected for one (1) year, and the other being elected for two (2) years. All subsequent appointments shall be for two (2) years.
5. The Rural Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC) will meet as often as it is deemed necessary,

appropriate and advisable. On the basis of majority vote of its membership, the Rural Transportation Advisory Committee may appoint a member of the committee to act as chairperson with the responsibility for coordination of the committee's activities.

6. The Transportation Planner of the Region O Council of Governments will serve as staff to the RTAC.

Section 4. Establishment of Rural Transportation Technical Committee (RTTC). A Rural Transportation Technical Committee shall be established with the responsibility of general review, guidance, and coordination of the transportation planning process for the Rural Transportation Planning Organization (RPO) and the responsibility for making recommendations to the respective local, state, and federal governmental agencies and the Rural Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC) regarding any necessary actions relating to the continuing transportation planning process.

1. The RTTC shall be responsible for development, review, and recommendation for approval of the rural transportation planning work program for the RPO, the Transportation Improvement Program, and revisions to the Transportation Improvement Program.
2. Membership of the Rural Transportation Technical Committee (RTTC) shall include technical representatives from all local and state governmental agencies directly related to and concerned with the transportation planning process for the RPO planning area. Initially, the membership shall include, but may not be limited to, the following:
 - A. County Manager (or his/her designee) from each of the three counties of the RPO planning area.
 - B. The Chief Administrative Official (or his/her designee) from each municipality in the Region O, RPO planning area.
 - C. Executive Director and Transportation Planner, Region O Council of Governments.
 - D. Division Engineer serving the 3rd Division of Highways, North Carolina Department of Transportation, or his/her designated representative.
 - E. Division Engineer, 6th Division of Highways, North Carolina Department of Transportation, or his/her designated representative.
 - F. Manager, Statewide Planning Branch, Planning and Environment, North Carolina Department of Transportation, or his/her designated representative.
 - G. Area Traffic Engineer, Division of Highways, Traffic Engineering Branch, North Carolina Department of Transportation.
 - H. Transportation providers for elderly & disabled passengers in the member counties
 - I. The Transportation Planner for the Wilmington Metropolitan Planning Organization, as ex officio.

3. The Rural Transportation Technical Committee shall meet when it is deemed necessary, appropriate and advisable. The Rural Transportation Technical Committee will be staffed by the Region O Transportation Planner who will act as a Chairperson with the responsibility for coordinating the committee(s) activities. Membership of the Rural Transportation Technical Committee may be altered on the basis of a majority vote of its membership and approval of the Rural Transportation Advisory Committee of the RPO.

Section 5. It is further agreed that all participating agencies will assist in the Rural Transportation planning process by providing planning assistance (where possible), data, and inventories in accordance with the approved work program.

Section 6. Parties to this Memorandum of Understanding may terminate their participation in the continuing transportation planning process by giving 90 days written notice to the other parties to the date of termination.

Section 7. In witness whereof, the parties of the Memorandum of Understanding have been authorized by appropriate and proper resolutions, and /or legislative authority to sign this Memorandum of Understanding, which becomes effective as of the last day signed. The following 6 pages comprise the signature pages from each party to this Memorandum.

County of Brunswick, North Carolina

This Memorandum of Understanding is signed this 15th day of October, 2001

By: [Signature]
Chairman,
Brunswick County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST: [Signature]
Clerk to the Board



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Rural Transportation Planning Organizations

**NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

STATEWIDE PLANNING BRANCH

Rural Transportation Planning Organizations



**NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

STATEWIDE PLANNING BRANCH

In 2000, the General Assembly ratified the Board of Transportation Reform Bill (House Bill 1304). This bill mandated the North Carolina Board of Transportation to develop a plan to establish Rural Transportation Planning Organizations (RPOs) as counterparts to the Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs).

The department set up a study committee that reported its findings on participants, geographical and administrative considerations, staffing and other issues. The study found a unanimous consensus that RPOs should be formed to provide a cooperative unified voice for rural entities to request projects and the funding needed for these projects. The committee also found that the rural areas wanted to be involved in integrated multi-modal transportation planning and the project programming process. The overall trend suggested that RPOs should be voluntary organizations rather than being mandated with an advisory role rather than a decision-making body.

In July 2000, The North Carolina General Assembly ratified Senate Bill 1195 that established RPOs to plan rural transportation systems and advise the department on rural transportation policy. These organizations will be a counterpart to the Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) established in the urban areas of North Carolina.

What are RPOs and their functions?

RPOs are voluntary organizations of local officials or their designees in addition to representatives of local transportation systems. A mutually adopted Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will be used to form and develop the RPO. The MOU will set in place the proposed area, membership, functions, and the responsibilities of the RPO. As outlined in the law, four core functions that the RPO will perform and provide are listed below:

- Developing, in cooperation with the department, long-range local and regional multi-modal transportation plans
- Providing a forum for public participation in the transportation planning process
- Developing and prioritizing suggestions for projects that the organization believes should be included in the State's Transportation Improvement Program
- Providing transportation-related information to local governments and other interested organizations and persons.

The RPO is not limited to these four core duties, but can expand their scope to include other planning initiatives and functions. Overall, RPOs should be involved in integrated multi-modal transportation planning at both the local and regional levels.

Who can form a RPO?

RPOs are organizations that include representatives from contiguous areas with three to fifteen counties as members. The total population of the entire area represented by the RPO must be at least 50,000 people as estimated by the Office of State Planning. Areas already included in a Metropolitan Planning Organization shall not be included in the RPO. The law does allow for the formation of a RPO with a MPO in the middle as long as the other criteria are met.

How will RPOs operate?

Each RPO in cooperation with NCDOT will determine how the RPO is administrated and staffed. The administrative entities could be, but are not limited to, regional economic development agencies, regional councils of government, chambers of commerce, and local governments. The staffing needs of the organization will be determined cooperatively by the RPO, NCDOT and any adjacent MPO.

What type of funding is available?

The General Assembly did not appropriate funding to implement RPOs. Neither the department nor the General Assembly can reallocate road maintenance funds to implement RPOs.

If funds are appropriated for RPOs, the members will contribute at least twenty percent of the cost of any staff resources employed by the organization. As the department moves forward in developing RPOs and determining the interest in this process, it will investigate funding sources for implementation.

